(b) and (c) Government are of the view that the foundations of durable peace between India and Pakistan must ultimately be laid in the hearts and minds of the people of bom countries. The promotion of people-to-people contacts between the two countries will naturally serve this objective, and also contribute to India's desire to establish peaceful, friendly and cooperative ties with Pakistan. In keeping with this approach, Government announced on 9th July 2001, measures to make travel between the two countries as easy and simple as possible, including through additional facilities at Attari, Munabao in Rajasthan and at designated points along the International Boundary and the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

Indo-U.S. relations

3414. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) where do our relations stand with USA after its new President took office;

(b) whether there is any pressure from USA to hold talks with Pakistan;

(c) whether Government have discussed terrorism and security environment in the region with USA recently; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Since assuming office in January 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush has on a number of occasions conveyed to the Prime Minister the importance he attaches to relations between India and the United States and his commitment to work towards further strengthening this relationship. The two sides have maintained a high level of bilateral engagement, both at political and official levels.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) International terrorism and regional security environment are part of the broad-based agenda of dialogue between the two countries. These issues were discussed during the Foreign Office Consultations and the Asian Security Dialogue between the Foreign Secretary and the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs on 17 May 2001 and in the meeting of

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

the India-U.S. Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism on 25-26 June 2001 in Washington D.C. These issues, *inter alia,* also featured in the discussions during other bilateral visits between the two sides, including during the visit to the United States by Minister of External Affairs and Defence in April 2001 and during the visits to India by the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage in May 2001 and by the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Mrs. Christina Rocca in July 2001.

Shuttling of Chhota Rajan

3415. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether gangster Chhota Rajan who has escaped from Bangkok hospital in mysterious circumstances sometime back is presently shuttling between Luxembourg and Switzerland to escape law in India;

(b) if so, the details of his present whereabouts and activities;

(c) whether there is any progress in locating and apprehending his contacts in nefarious activities in India;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action initiated against him; and

(e) the measures taken in recent weeks to get Chhota Rajan extradited to India to face the law?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (e) Government have no information about the present whereabouts and activities of Sadashiv Nikalje @ Chhota Rajan. A request prepared by the Mumbai Police for the extradition of the fugitive offender, was forwarded to the Government of Thailand on 16.10.2000. Further measures for extraditing him to India can be taken only when his whereabouts are known.

Sanctions imposed by U.S.

3416. SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the sanctions imposed by the United States due to the nuclear test during 1998 have been lifted;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and